

FBI Provides Tips For Keeping Cyber Predators Away From Your Children

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Police arrested and detained a 42-year-old on "eight complaints of lewd proposal to a minor, computer crimes, and enticing away a child under 16."

The man drove to Nebraska to pick up a 14-year-old girl "for sex following Internet conversations." Arresting police officers from Oklahoma reported they located the man and discovered the teenager inside his vehicle.

The police officers examined the teen's mobile device and found eight text messages from the man proposing sexual activity with the girl.

The man admitted he sent the text messages and that "he was aware that the victim was under the age of sixteen." Jarrel Wade, "Man accused of bringing Nebraska girl, 14, to Tulsa for sex," www.tulsaworld.com (Apr. 11, 2013).

The FBI reports that despite media attention to the dangers of social networking for children, the federal agency still receives "hundreds of complaints per year about children who have been victims of criminal incidents on social networks."

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children published an Internet safety pamphlet that includes a survey of teenagers in the U.S. The study revealed that 38 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds "had posted self-created content such as photos, videos, artwork, or stories." Meanwhile a survey of 10- to 17-year-olds showed that 46 percent admitted that they have given out their personal information to someone they did not know. Among 16- to 17-year-olds, approximately 56 percent share personal information with strangers.

Young people use social networks to connect with loved ones and others, but many of them are not aware of, or do not believe in, the danger of using these sites and establishing relationships with strangers. So, what can parents do to help protect their children from this danger?

The FBI gives the following tips:

- Make sure that your computer is placed in an open, common room in your house.
- Monitor your children's online activities.
- Talk to your kids and explain clearly why they should not disclose any personal information online. Tell them that if they want to post photos or any other identifying information online, they should ask for your permission first.
- Tell your kids that they cannot get images back once they post them online.
- To be certain that your children are not disclosing their personal information, check their profiles and what they post online.
- Teach your kids how to use privacy settings or limit access to their profiles.
- Instruct your kids to add only the people they actually know to their contact list. You should ask your kids about people that they communicate with online.
- Encourage your kids to create strong passwords and to choose appropriate screen names.
- Check the sites that they visit, and make sure that you read and follow safety tips that the sites provide.

- Go through social networking websites with your kids and discuss and share ideas about which websites may be potentially risky.
- If you detect any inappropriate activity, report it to the website or law enforcement immediately.
- Make it a rule in your home that your children will never give out their personal information or meet anyone in person unless they inform you and ask for your consent. If, for whatever reason, you agree that your child can meet with an online friend, talk to the parents or guardians of that person first and accompany your kids to meet with that individual in a public place.
- Don't forget that most smartphones function just like a computer.

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